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SPEECH  
OF THE  
HON. S. W. INGE, OF ALABAMA,  
ON THE  
RELATION OF PARTIES  
TO  
THE MEXICAN WAR.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, MARCH 22, 1848.

In rising, for the first time, to address this House, I cannot refrain from some allusion to that malign spirit of party, which seems to actuate the majority, and which has, to the exclusion of everything else, influenced their conduct since this Congress assembled. And I allude to it, sir, but to deprecate it; and to express my profound regret that, at a time like this, when the welfare and honor of the republic demand the united and zealous action of her statesmen, the voice of patriotism in this Hall is silent, and our ears are vexed by the constant clamors of party. For nearly two years the fires of war have reddened the southwestern horizon, and in contemplation of the brilliant deeds which have signalized the triumphant advance of our armies, the heart of the nation has throbbed only with patriotic admiration. So intense are the feelings which this bloody struggle with a foreign nation has aroused among the people, that they have almost ceased to remember their party struggles at home. Looking abroad upon the theatre of war, they have seen the quick succession of battles and of victories, which have flashed upon the country, and forgotten their own domestic broils. But the politicians who sit opposite to me seem to be a distinct class, insensible to the glory of our arms, and dead to the sympathies which pervade the masses. Controlling as they do the action of this Chamber, the country looks to them to support the demands of the public service. They look not to the public service or the national honor—but but to the ends and purposes of party. Their minds aspire to nothing above the dignity of a party issue. A successful parliamentary trick is, with them, a matter of more congratulation than a victory achieved over the foreign enemy, and it is a question of far more importance to determine, how, the political war is to be carried on, than how the Mexican war shall be terminated.

I do not object, sir, to the existence of parties, so long as they are restrained within legitimate bounds. From the very nature of things, in all free States, where the mind of man is untrammelled, parties must ever exist. This country owes much in its pursuit of political science to party collisions of intellect, from which truth has been eliminated. In every well-ordered republic history informs us of the existence of parties; nor did they cease to exist but with the free government from which they sprung. Parties and party discussion have ever been coeval with liberty. In the free States of Greece parties existed, the offspring of freedom and the parents of eloquence, nor did they end till the flag of Alexander waved in triumph over the temples of Pericles. So was it in Rome. Great questions of public interest were discussed, and parties continued to exist until the Diadem of the Cæsars supplanted the Tribunitial power. I believe, sir, the welfare of this country depends upon the maintenance of the organization of the Democratic party; the very purpose of that organization is the preservation of this object.

The policy and objects of the antagonistic party I shall endeavor to unfold in the course of my remarks.

The history of parties, in connection with the Mexican war, in its origin, progress, and termination, forms a curious chapter in American politics. I shall examine the relation of parties to this great question, with a view of presenting the conduct of each to the impartial judgment of the people; and in my comments upon the course of that party opposed to the present Administration, I desire to be understood as limiting their application to politicians by *trade*. The great body of the American people, however known by party appellations, and divided by differences of opinion, are moved by the same impulses of patriotism when the national honor is involved.

The history of Texas, its revolution, and subsequent annexation to the American confederacy, is so familiarly known to the world, as to relieve me from minute detail. I shall advert only to the prominent events upon which my argument rests.

Prior to the year 1834, Texas was an independent State of the Mexican confederacy, under the Constitution of 1824, having similar relations to the Federal Government and her sister States, which exist between the States and Federal Government of our own political system.

Santa Anna, at the head of an army of mercenaries, subverted the Constitution of 1824; abolished the sovereignty of the States, and erected upon the ruins of the republic, a central military despotism. The people of Texas remonstrated against the lawless proceedings of the despot, but in vain; he only inflamed his lust of power, and he determined to crush opposition by military force. The invasion of Texas by a formidable army, commanded by Santa Anna in person, was met by a determined spirit of resistance. The battle of San Jacinto was fought and won, and the independence of Texas established.

Who will deny the right of revolution to the people of Texas under such circumstances? They had been invited by the Mexican Government to colonize the State of Texas, then under the dominion of the savage. Tribes of Indians roamed over her fair plains, acknowledging no law but their own barbarous nomadic customs, and setting at defiance the feeble power of Mexico. It was the policy of Mexico to reclaim this country, and erect a barrier of civilized settlements against the ingress of the savage to her territory west of the Rio Grande. The hardy pioneers of our own country were invited to populate Texas, and to exercise all the rights of free Government and State sovereignty in the land of their adoption. They abandoned none of the rights of freemen by their migration, for under the Federal Constitution of 1824 they had the same political rights in Texas which they had enjoyed in Missouri and elsewhere, whilst they were citizens of the United States. The revolution was the result, the legitimate and lawful result, of tyrannical aggression by a military usurper upon the liberties of the Texan people. By their heroic and successful resistance they vindicated their lineage from the sires of the American revolution.

The battle of San Jacinto terminated the Texan war with Mexico. Immediately after that event, Santa Anna, then President of Mexico, and uniting in his own person all the powers of Government, acknowledged "the full, entire, and perfect independence of the Republic of Texas," with the Rio Grande as the western boundary. Our own Government, and the leading Powers of Europe, seeing no effort on the part of Mexico to re-establish her power, and regarding her claim to sovereignty as abandoned, also recognised the independence of Texas.

Eight years elapsed from the establishment of Texan independence, before the question of annexation was presented to the American people, for consideration. It was early foreseen from obvious causes that the State of Texas would

be restored to the American confederacy. The public mind had been long contemplating this great national question, before the submission of Mr. Tyler's treaty to the Senate for ratification. This treaty was rejected in the spring of 1844, when the Presidential canvass was opening, and the slumbering passions of the people were awakening to the tocsin of party. The friends of annexation hoped, in view of the great importance of this question—appealing as it did irresistibly to the pecuniary interests of the North and East, and the sympathies of the South and West—that it would not become a party issue in the contest then approaching. It could not be doubted that the Democratic party would favor it; in 1803 that party had acquired the broad and fertile domain of Louisiana, whereby the area of freedom was extended over the most valuable portion of the American continent. By that acquisition they were committed to the policy of territorial extension. The Federal party of 1803 had opposed the purchase of Louisiana, upon grounds which then seemed plausible; but thirty years had elapsed, and their idle speculation had been exploded by the grand development of events.

But the national importance of this question did not preserve it from the desecration of party. Believing that the abolition feeling of the free States could be roused into opposition, Mr. Clay took his position against annexation in his Raleigh letter of 17th April, 1844. Instantly, as by magic, annexation lost its nationality. It was no longer a great American question; a large portion of the American people were required to oppose it, by the ukase of their party leader. The Democratic party soon after assembled in Convention, nominated their candidate for the Presidency, and proclaimed the "annexation of Texas," as one of the objects of their policy.

Thus, sir, by the action of Mr. Clay and his friends, the fate of Texas was suspended upon the issue of the pending contest.

But I am not to be understood as questioning Mr. Clay's right to oppose annexation; my object is, to call attention to the grounds of his opposition. In defiance of all the facts I have stated showing the contrary, it was assumed that Mexico had rights of sovereignty over Texas, and in substance, that the annexation of the latter would authorize Mexico to wage war upon us. This is an argument against the rights of revolution, the obvious tendency of which was to induce Mexico to revive her forgotten and abandoned claim to Texas. And we find the Mexican Government at home, and her minister here, urging the very arguments assumed by the Whig party in the canvass of 1844.

In this we see the germ of the Mexican war, and the Whig party are justly responsible for its incipient causes.

The views of each candidate were before the American people for determination; the one denying in effect the sacred right of resistance to tyrants, and maintaining the tyrant's claim to bind the broken chains of his despotism upon a free people; the other, insisting not only on the right of resistance, but further, that the people of Texas had successfully resisted—that they were in fact, and rightfully independent; and being so, the right of annexation was a necessary corollary. The American people sustained the Democratic party; free principles were vindicated, and the dominion of despotism receded beyond the Rio Grande.

The succeeding Congress passed joint resolutions for the annexation of Texas, upon certain terms and conditions, to be submitted to the people of that country for acceptance. Within a few days after the passage of the joint resolutions, Almonte, the Mexican Minister, then resident near our Government, entered his solemn protest against this act, declaring it to be an infringement of the rights of his Government, and at the same time demanded his passports and returned home. It was definitely known from sources official and unofficial, that Mexico regarded annexation as cause of war, and would

proceed to sustain her claims by the invasion of Texas ; her claim was to the whole of Texas, and her threat was, to plant her conquering standard on the banks of the Sabine.

On the 4th day of July, 1845, a convention of the people of Texas, called together to consider the propositions of our Government, accepted the terms and conditions of the joint resolutions by a unanimous vote ; and on the 29th of December following, Congress passed a second joint resolution " for the admission of the State of Texas into the Union," and thus this great event was consummated, and Texas restored to the American confederacy. Upon the acceptance of the proposed terms of annexation by the Convention of Texas, she was virtually in the Union, and authorized to invoke the protection of our Government. By her alliance with us, she had excited to fury the angry passions of her implacable foe, and we had become bound by the compact of union, to protect her from the consequences of an act to which we were a party. An invasion was not only threatened, but armies were collected and marshalled beyond the Rio Grande for this purpose. Now, sir, it will not be controverted, that it was the paramount duty of the Executive, under these circumstances, to employ the military power of the Government to repel the threatened invasion of the State of Texas. On the 15th of June, in anticipation of the action of the Convention, an adequate military force under Gen. Taylor, was ordered to advance to the mouth of the Sabine. Subsequently, in obedience to orders, he took a position at Corpus Christi, beyond the Nueces, where he remained until the 12th of March, 1846. In the meantime, every effort had been made by our Government to conciliate Mexico, and induce her to settle existing difficulties by negotiation. But our proffers of negotiation were spurned, our concessions despised, and our attempts at conciliation held as evidences of cowardice.

Such was the state of our relations on the 4th of October, 1845, when Gen. Taylor advised an onward march to the Rio Grande, under the impression that a display of our " military preparation," would tend to the peaceable adjustment of all questions in dispute. He thought it advisable to make this advance with the view of " showing" our readiness to vindicate by force our title to the Rio Grande. This advice was given with one qualification, viz : " if our Government designs to make the boundary of the Rio Grande an ultimatum." But before the 13th of January, 1846, the day on which the order to advance was issued to Gen. Taylor, our Government had determined to make this line an ultimatum. I concede, the President alone had no power to determine this question. I make no reference to him when I speak of the Government. On the 31st of December, 1845, Congress had passed an act establishing a port of delivery at Corpus Christi, beyond the Nueces, and within the territory *now* said to be disputed ; and on the 4th of February, 1846, Congress passed another act establishing a post route within the territory intermediate the Nueces and the Rio Grande, and the language of the act refers to Corpus Christi, as " Corpus Christi in Texas." One of the above acts was passed before the order to advance was issued—both, before the advance was actually made. But apart from these legislative declarations of the two houses of Congress, to which it would be unnecessary to make reference, but for the purpose of showing a harmony of opinion between the Executive and Legislative branches of the Government, we have other and more conclusive evidences, that the Rio Grande is the true boundary of Texas.

The only claim of Texas to any part of her territory rests upon *successful revolution*, and as far as her revolution extended, *pari passu* her territory extended. Now, it is matter of history, that the people west of the Nueces participated in the revolution, and made common cause with Texas for liberation. The Convention which declared the independence of Texas in March,



1836, was composed, in part, of delegates from the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, and of course, the inhabitants of the intermediate country were included in the declaration.

In consequence of the armistice agreed upon between the two countries in 1843, Santa Anna, then President of Mexico, made the following proclamation through Gen. Woll, one of the commanders of his army:

"3d. Every individual who shall be found at the distance of one league from the left bank of the Rio Bravo will be regarded as a favorer and accomplice of the usurpers of that part of the national territory."

Again, after the defeat of Santa Anna at Buena Vista, in his report of that battle he says:

"I observed we could say nothing of peace while the Americans were on this side of the Rio Bravo, or occupied any part of the Mexican territory."

But I need not multiply proofs upon a purely geographical question which is so well settled, especially since Mexico herself, pending the agitation of annexation in this country, offered to acknowledge the independence of Texas, with the Rio Grande as her boundary, upon condition that she would not annex herself to any foreign power. And it is not necessary to my purpose to show an indisputable title to the Rio Grande; conceding the intermediate territory to be disputable, and we had an equal right to its occupation with the adverse claimant. Moreover, if the territory had been clearly the property of Mexico, and our armed occupation had been necessary for the purpose of repelling invasion, under the law of nations, we were authorised to extend our armies over it. That an invasion was determined on, is no longer matter of conjecture. The march of the army to Matamoras did not bring on the war, but merely determined the locality of the first battle. It was a movement designed to hasten a peaceful adjustment of pending difficulties, as well as to overawe the spirit of aggression by a display of "military preparation." And, looking at all contingencies, it was wisely determined to meet the invasion if it did occur, upon an unsettled frontier, before the populous parts of the country had been visited by its scourge.

Well, sir, all our efforts to avoid war were unavailing. On the 24th of April, Gen. Arista, then in command of the Mexican forces, communicated to Gen. Taylor that "he considered hostilities commenced and should prosecute them." On the same day, Capt. Thornton, with a detachment of sixty-three dragoons, was surrounded by a large body of Mexican troops; a short engagement ensued, in which sixteen of Thornton's men were killed and wounded, and the remainder compelled to surrender. Thornton and his men were on this side the Rio Grande, on the soil of Texas, one of the States of the American Confederacy. The Mexican army had left their own territory, and crossed the river for offensive purposes, and actually commenced the war, by shedding the blood of American soldiers upon American soil. These facts were communicated to Congress by the Executive on the 11th May, 1846, with a recommendation to Congress "to recognize the existence of the war, and to place at the disposition of the Executive the means of prosecuting the war with vigor." In conformity with the recommendation of the Executive, Congress, on the 13th of the same month, passed "an act providing for the prosecution of the existing war between the United States and the Republic of Mexico," the preamble of which declares that, "by the act of the Republic of Mexico, a state of war exists between that Government and the United States." This act provided for a prosecution of the war to a speedy and successful termination, and appropriated ten millions of dollars, and authorised the Executive to accept the services of fifty thousand volunteers for this purpose. In the House of Representatives but fourteen votes were recorded in the negative upon the passage of this act, and in the Senate but two.

Now, sir, I have shown the origin of this war; and its subsequent recognition, by an almost unanimous vote of the two houses of Congress. Up to this period it was not a party question. When the cannon's roar from the banks of the Rio Grande broke upon the American ear, the nation sprung to arms. The morning gun of the Revolution from Bunker's Hill, aroused not a purer and holier enthusiasm. The resistless tide of patriotism rolled over the land, covering with its wave the fears of the timid and the calculations of the selfish. The husbandman left his fields, the artisan his workshop, the merchant the marts of commerce; all classes emulous in their support of the national cause, struggled for precedence in the conflict. Hundreds of thousands rushed to uphold the flag of their country, and rescue her soil from the invader. The whole people were animated by the same impulse which pervaded the christian nations of Europe, when Peter the Hermit raised the standard of the Cross for the rescue of the holy mausoleum from the infidel. Where then was the anti-war party which has since sprung up in the two houses of Congress? If the war was unconstitutional on the 13th of May, it should have been avowed, and the war bill voted down. If the country between the Nueces and the Rio Grande belonged to Mexico, that fact should *then* have been avowed, and the army withdrawn to the east bank of the Nueces. But at this time, as at first, was its great antecedent, the annexation of Texas; the war was not a party question. No objection was urged by the Whig party to the body of the bill, providing the men and money for the prosecution of the war into the heart of Mexico; for to that extent the bill upon its face shows the war was to be carried. The only exception taken by that party was to the preamble of the bill declaring that war existed by the act of Mexico. The Whig party of that Congress were willing to vote the supplies, and did vote them, when those supplies were asked for the purpose of prosecuting the war, to an indefinite extent into the heart of the enemy's country. Now, I insist that the vote of the Whig party in support of this bill, commits them fully to the constitutionality and justice of the war. And this is the effect of their vote, with or without the preamble. They cannot now oppose the war upon the grounds assumed, without placing their party in the present Congress, in glaring and shameless inconsistency with the recorded acts of that party in the last Congress. It cannot be said by those who voted for this bill, that they were influenced by the perilous situation of the army, and that, therefore, their vote cannot be construed into approbation of the war; for it was well known, that as early as August, 1845, Gen. Taylor had been authorized to call for volunteers, not from Texas only, but from the States of Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Kentucky; and that he would be able thence to derive assistance much sooner than troops could be raised under the act. And in January, 1846, he had been authorized to make a requisition upon the Executive of Texas for such militia force as he might deem necessary for his own safety, which force was at all times at his command. If he had deemed it necessary he could have called out this force prior to his movement. This extensive authority to call for troops, volunteers as well as militia, enabled him if he had so chosen to have marched to the Rio Grande with twenty thousand men. He could have deployed upon the plain of Palo Alto, such an army as the western world had never seen. An army potent in numbers, splendid in equipment, exulting with valor. What would have been the effect of a display upon such a scale of "our military preparation." Palo Alto would have remained unconsecrated ground, and Resaca forever unknown in history or in song.

Then the vote of the Whig party of the 29th Congress, in support of the war bill cannot be explained consistently in this way. Taylor had a

sufficient force for his purposes as results proved, and they knew it, and they could only have voted for the act, because they approved the views of the President's message of the 11th of May; hence by that vote the Whig party was committed to the support of the war, and if they have since opposed it, the reason of that opposition should be known.

Now, sir, on the 13th of May, 1846, we have the temple of Janus thrown wide open, and the war in full blast, with the complete recognition and endorsement of both parties in the two Houses of Congress; and there was no indication of opposition during that session. Thus the session terminated. The great victories on the Rio Grande had been achieved, and their effect upon the country cannot be unknown to members of this House. The public mind was in a state of excitation unknown since the battle of New Orleans. Party was forgotten, and the people only remembered they were Americans. "Bonfires and illuminations" as in days past, attested the general exultation. But while the pæans of a generous people ascended to the God of battles, a hoarse disturbant croak was occasionally heard, marring the harmony of the national anthem. It was soon discovered that the partizan spirit of the country was not dead, but slept. As soon as the public mind found comparative repose from its first excitement, the tendency of events could not be mistaken. The President was commander in chief of the army. He had a right to prescribe the plan of campaign. He shared with our Generals in the field in responsibility to the country, for the success of our military operations. In this manner identified with the war, and responsible for its success, *it was seen* that he would share alike in its glory. A generous people could never hold the Executive responsible for the calamities and disasters of a war, and deny to him a participation in the renown of its benefits and triumphs. From the position of the Whig party upon every old question, it had become a matter of absolute political necessity, to make up a new issue, or the party was disbanded. They found themselves in the predicament of the discomfited Richard upon Bosworth field, when he exclaimed—

"A horse, a horse, my Kingdom for a horse!"

They wanted an issue, and were prepared to exclaim—

"My country for an issue!"

The bank was admitted to be an obsolete idea, and its rival measure the Independent Treasury had stood the test of time and scrutiny, and won its way over formidable prejudices to the confidence of the people. The Whig party cannot now find fault with the Independent Treasury.

The revenue tariff of 1846 has been established in lieu of the unequal and burdensome tariff of 1842, and the official reports of the Treasury show an increase of revenue under its operation, of about eight millions per annum, with other incalculable benefits, by a development of all the industrial pursuits of the country, and a vast increase of our foreign commerce. The Whig party do not desire "to disturb the present tariff."

Every measure of policy to which the Democratic party were pledged by the resolutions of the Baltimore Convention in May, 1844, has been established, and the country is now in the enjoyment of their full fruition. And so completely are they vindicated by their practical operation, that party opposition is rebuked into silence.

Thus it is apparent that the Whig party before this time would have ceased to exist, but for their opposition to the war. They had abandoned opposition to the administration upon every peace question, and if they had gone with the Democratic party in support of the war, they would, *ipso facto*, have merged themselves in the great Democratic party, and have been lost in its immensity.

In the interval between the first and second sessions of the 29th Congress, the partizan press of New England, in a few instances took ground against

the war, and in a feeble and querulous tone carped at the course of the Executive; but they were hardly heard amid the loud shouts of exultation at the triumph of our arms. The Whig party had not yet announced their opposition to the war. On the first Monday in December, 1846, Congress assembled, and the President sent in his annual message, containing a full, lucid, and impartial narrative of events preceding the Mexican war and its history up to that time. Among other things, he said in that message:

"The war has been represented as unjust and unnecessary, and as one of aggression on our part upon a weak and injured enemy. Such erroneous views though entertained by *but few*, have been widely and extensively circulated, not only at home, but have been spread throughout Mexico and the whole world. A more effectual means could not have been devised to encourage the enemy and protract the war, than to advocate and adhere to their cause, and thus give them aid and comfort."

The time had arrived in the judgment of political savans, to throw the Whig party of the country in opposition to the war. This question, like the annexation question, which had preceded it, and for the same reasons and motives, was destined to be the mere foot-ball of party. When the message came up for discussion, distinguished members of the opposition declared the war to be "unconstitutional and unjust," and, in loud, rapid, and malignant speeches, denounced the Executive as its author. With utter disregard of the written statements of the document under discussion, they insisted that the charge in the above extract applied to the whole Whig party, when by its very terms, it was limited to a "few" misguided persons. In the canvass of 1844, we often heard of the "great Whig party," has its numbers since then so sloughed off, as to make the adjective *few*, applicable to it in this sense? They assailed the march to the Rio Grande as an unconstitutional movement, whereby the Executive had wrested the war making power from Congress, and pointed to the Oregon negotiation, and asked why the Executive had not marched the army to the line of 54° 40'. In the bitterness of party zeal, they had forgotten all the facts and circumstances of the Oregon negotiation. What analogy is there in the two cases? In the first place there was a treaty existing between the two Countries, containing a clause of joint occupation, and prohibiting either from taking exclusive possession. In the second place, no invasion was meditated or threatened by Great Britain, and we had no defenceless population in that country which called for the protection of our army. If the cases had been analogous, the action of the Executive would have been the same. But, in justice to the good sense of gentlemen on the other side, (some of whom have referred to this question during the present session,) I am not permitted to consider the Oregon case as seriously referred to. I am to understand it as an insinuation, that our Government would pursue a course of iron-handed oppression to weak and degraded Mexico, and covering submission to Britain. Well, sir, I must say its obtuseness as a sarcasm, is more remarkable than its absurdity as an argument. If we were to obliterate all reminiscences; if these gentlemen could expunge the history of the revolution and of the last war, and leave only the record of our colonial bondage, there would be some point in their insinuation. But while partizans on this floor may endeavor to pluck from the national escutcheon the trophies earned in past conflicts with the proudest kingdom of the world; every man who has an American heart will refer to the past, for evidences that we do not fear, however much we may deprecate a collision with England. We can proudly point to Saratoga and Yorktown, to Chippewa and New Orleans, to naval victories which lit up the ocean with their splendor, and despise such aspersions upon the national fame.

By the course of the Whig party at this early stage of the second session of the twenty-ninth Congress, the Mexican war was made a party question. Its support, its responsibility, was thrown upon the Democratic party. It is true, the opponents of the war, during this session, voted supplies of men

and money for its prosecution, while, at the same time, they denounced it, and disclaimed all responsibility for its consequences. Error is ever inconsistent, and in no case more glaringly than in this. If the war is "unconstitutional and unjust," its prosecution is a crime, and if I, sir, entertained this opinion, under no circumstances could I make myself *particeps criminis* by voting supplies. If it be true that the President has involved us in an unjust war, the honor of the country demands the immediate withdrawal of our troops, and that due reparation be made to injured Mexico. All these consequences follow necessarily from the position taken by the Whig party. Gentlemen on the other side are too intelligent not to admit it, if their party policy did not forbid such an admission. But they have succeeded in their object, and made up an issue with the President. They have taken a position which places them adverse to him, but they shrink from carrying out the legitimate consequences of their position. Why did they not vote against supplies during the last session? We know, from their published speeches, they were opposed to the war, and if they had followed their opinions and feelings, such would have been their course. This question is readily answered. They were controlled in this, not by their sense of propriety, or by patriotic feelings, but by an influence generally far more potent with the politician—the fear of that public indignation which, more terrible than the red lightnings of heaven, would have blasted them in their iniquity!

I must do the opposition the justice to say that I believe they desire to act *consistently*. They feel the embarrassment of their position. They appreciate the extreme awkwardness of voting supplies for a war which they condemn as unconstitutional and unjust. They want to throw off the mask, and proclaim to the world their detestation of the war and its objects, and refuse to vote another dollar for its support. But before this can be done, the public mind must be prepared for it, and hence the course of the Whig party during the present session of Congress. At its commencement the President sent in his annual message, recommending appropriations of men and money necessary to the vigorous prosecution of the war to a speedy peace. Immediate legislation was deemed of the highest importance in effecting the object in view. The opponents of the war have a majority in this House, and therefore control its conduct and legislation. And what have they done? More than eight weeks of the session was consumed in denunciations of the President and the war, before the majority permitted a reference of the message to the appropriate committees. But this was necessary to prepare the public mind for the course intended to be pursued. By misrepresentation of the objects of the war and the motives of the Executive; by sophistical arguments designed to place their own Government in the wrong, and excite sympathy in behalf of the public enemy, they hoped to delude the public mind and corrupt the national heart. The course of the opposition in this House clearly indicates their fixed determination not to vote the necessary supplies, and this would have been announced at the beginning of the session, if their moral nerve had been commensurate with their partizan malignity. A loan was necessary, which could have been readily procured by the issuance of Treasury notes, without creating the slightest business pressure. But instead of this, a loan bill has been passed, which authorizes the issuance of a six per cent. stock. Now, when this bill was reported from the committee, it was the opinion in commercial circles that no money could be raised under it; that capitalists would not buy the stock. And there was good reason to believe when the bill passed this House that the stock could not be negotiated. Circumstances have since changed, which must lead to an appreciation of Government stocks. But these changes were not anticipated when the committee of Ways and

Means reported this bill. What was the anticipated effect upon business, of throwing this amount of stock (sixteen millions) into the market, and withdrawing this large sum of money from the ordinary channels of commerce? When we look to this, sir, we will see the object in view; the effect anticipated was to give stringency to the money market; to derange commercial operations; to paralyze the business of the country. The object was to bring odium upon the war.

An increase in our military force was necessary, if we intended to prosecute the war to a successful termination, and the early action of Congress, providing this force, was strenuously recommended by the Executive. But up to this day we have no report from the Military Committee of this House upon that recommendation of the message. The opposition are perhaps awaiting the effects of the loan bill they have given us, upon the public sentiment of the country; to see whether the pressure upon business which that bill is designed to create, will not arouse such manifestations of opposition to the war, that a pretext will be afforded for refusing any increase in our military force. Such has been the course of the majority in this House, upon the important *practical* subjects of legislation, so earnestly recommended to their "early" consideration. While our war-worn army, in the midst of a hostile population of eight millions, were anxiously looking to the American Congress for reinforcements, the time of the House has been consumed in denunciations of the President, and in the passage of abstract resolutions embodying the opinion of the majority upon the *origin of the war*. They have passed a resolution which declares that the war was "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President." This resolution was passed by the unanimous vote of the opposition. Much that is said in debate here may find some excuse in the excitement of the moment, but this resolution cannot be excused, for it is studiously and ingeniously drawn to unite the whole Whig party, and bears upon its face the marks of callous calculation. What will be the judgment of the people upon those who have, for a *party purpose*, placed their own country in the wrong, perverted the well-known facts of history, and sullied the national records with a deliberate falsehood?

In commenting upon the course of the opposition during the present session, I must not omit to notice some of the charges made in this House on yesterday, which, however pointless they may be, challenge attention from their novelty. Some days since we passed a resolution calling upon the President for certain correspondence between the Secretary of War and Generals Scott and Taylor, which has been transmitted to this House. The President was charged on yesterday with "garbling" this correspondence. In reply I have only to state that this is not true; there has been no garbling; every material part of this correspondence in reference to Gen. Scott is in possession of the House, and upon the clerk's table. But when this correspondence is examined, it does not suit the purpose of the gentleman, (Mr. CLINGMAN,) who displayed so much eagerness in its pursuit. No charge against the Executive can be predicated upon it, and the gentleman who brought it before the House, now seeks to suppress it. He finds it necessary to change the direction of his remarks, and proceeds to impute to the President and his advisers imbecility in planning the campaigns in Mexico, which have been so successfully and brilliantly executed. True, he does not specify in what the imbecility consists, because it is safer to deal in generalities. Sir, we are prone to test any project of peace or war by its success. Since the commencement of this war two grand objects have been kept steadily in view, the conquest and occupation of California and the capture of the city of Mexico. The first was important, because in the exaction of indemnity from Mexico for the war forced

upon us, we had no option but an acquisition of territory. No part of the public domain of Mexico was more valuable to us than California, on account of its agricultural and commercial advantages. The world, perhaps, does not afford more inducements to the cultivator of the soil, than the fertile and beautiful valleys of the San Joachimi and Sacramento, while the safe and capacious harbors which dot her western shore, invite to their bosoms the rich commerce of the east. The second object was important to bring the war to a termination. It was believed that the capture of this gorgeous city, once the seat of a different, if not a higher civilization, and now the centre of Mexican wealth and power, and the stronghold of military despotism, would secure the ardently desired object of the war—peace, permanent and substantial peace, between the two countries. The result has established the wisdom of these plans and objects. Our flag has been borne across the entire province of California, and now waves in triumph over the peaceful bays of San Diego, Monterey, and San Francisco. California is ours—the god Terminus has marched westward in a new direction until the waves of the Pacific wash his feet, and his arms are extended over ten degrees of latitude. Then, sir, the plan for the occupation of California, has been as ably conceived as it has been brilliantly executed.

Has there been any fault in the plan of campaign for the capture of the Capital? I admit it was startling from its very boldness; the timid mind shrunk from its contemplation, terrified at the apparent difficulties of its execution. The first feature of this plan was the reduction of that massive and feudal structure which frowned upon the sea, as if in defiance of assault, the wave-washed and battle-scarred castle of San Juan d'Uloa. The opinion was prevalent in Europe that the castle was impregnable. But our valiant army appeared before it. They were intimidated by none of the idle fears which even yet, haunt the mind of the politician. The angry surf raged along the coast, as if the sea god Neptune had determined to battle on the side of Mexico. The transports which bore them surmounted the surf, the sand hills were gained, and the American cannon demanded a surrender; the gates of that celebrated fortress opened to the summons, and the Gibraltar of the western world yielded to the irresistible prestige of our arms. Gen. Scott, in his despatch announced to the President that "the flag of the United States floats in triumph over the walls of this city and the castle of San Juan d'Uloa." Thus it seems that the first feature of the plan was practicable.

But the consummation of the plan required the march of the army over the Vera Cruz road to the capital. They commenced the ascent of the mountain with the same buoyancy and celerity they would have moved down an inclined plain. And never in ancient or modern times was a national flag borne onward over such difficulties. We are informed that, in times past, Hannibal crossed the Alps, but that was before gunpowder had ever awakened the slumbering echoes of the mountain. Napoleon led his battalions over the snow-covered summit of San Bernard; but instead of an armed force to arrest his progress, the monks of the convent invoked the blessings of Heaven upon him. Not so with the advance of our army. When the conquering columns of Worth toiled up the jagged Cordilleras, fortresses with their bristling armaments frowned upon them. But they bore in their front the eagles of our country, resplendant in the glory of Palo Alto, Resaca, and Monterey. Cerro Gordo was reached, and our columns hardly shook as they swept through the pass. Jalapa, Perote, Puebla, in quick succession, saw the armed enemies of despotism defile through their streets. The miraculous conflicts in the valley of Mexico were fought. The garitas were surmounted and dripping with blood, the victors of so many glorious battle fields planted the standard of their country upon the highest dome of the enemy's capital. Now,

sir, I must repeat, that the result of these campaigns sufficiently establishes the wisdom of their conception, and that the charge of "imbecility" is thrown back upon the assailants of the Executive.

It was said on yesterday that if Gen. Taylor had marched to the Rio Grande with a greater force, the consequences would have been different, that Mexico would have yielded to intimidation, and war would not have ensued. Now, sir, this is an assault upon Gen. Taylor, as my preceeding remarks will show, though ostensibly directed against the President, and comes from one (Mr. CLINGMAN,) inimical to Gen. Taylor, and who seeks covertly to snatch from the brow of Taylor his hard earned laurels, to decorate another distinguished military chieftain, whose party orthodoxy is not suspected. The amount of force was a matter of discretion with Gen. Taylor; he was authorised to augment it, but he decided not to do so, and the battles on the Rio Grande show that he had a sufficient force to repel, triumphantly, any attack made upon him. I will admit if he had marched from Corpus Christi with an army fourfold larger, that he would in all probability have seen no enemy in his march, and no attack would have been made upon him at Palo Alto. But under no circumstances could war have been avoided, but by removing the cause of irritation. If we had abandoned the State of Texas to the Sabine, and the inhabitants of Texas had quietly bowed their necks to the yoke of Mexico, war could have been avoided. If Taylor's army had been so large as to cause intimidation, and prevent the passage of the river by the Mexican troops, of course we would have had no battles *at that time*, but the effect would have been to postpone the collision of arms to some other time when circumstances favored a successful attack. In the meantime we would have had a state of war without battles, and our Texan frontier, wherever unprotected, would have been exposed to sudden incursion. My opinion is, that if the battles on the Rio Grande could have been avoided, war was unavoidable, and that it was not the policy of our Government to attempt to avoid, by a timid abandonment of our rights, an evil which we were prepared to encounter.

The gentleman from Tennessee, (Mr. HASKELL,) informed us that the protraction of the war was attributable to the inadequacy in Gen. Taylor's force, and the force which composed the column of Scott. This charge raises an important subject of inquiry. It seems that gentlemen on both sides of the House admit the war to have been protracted by agencies at home. We agree in the result, and only differ as to the causes. The gentleman from Tennessee has assigned the causes, which, in his opinion, have produced this result, and I am disposed to award great respect to the opinions of military gentlemen. But it so happens, sir, that military men disagree on this subject. I have a letter before me from a very distinguished gentleman now with the army in Mexico, who has fought, I believe, in the glorious column of Scott, and who belongs to the same political party with the gentleman from Tennessee. That there may be no misapprehension of his views, I will read his letter.

*Extract from Colonel Wynkoop's Letter.*

"We, HERE, can see no difference between the men who, in 1776, succored the British, and those who, in 1847, gave arguments and sympathy to the Mexicans. This kind of language, from a man who came into this campaign a Whig in policy, may sound strange to you, but I have again and again been compelled to listen to, and to suffer that, which would have changed the disposition and alienated the affections of the most determined partizan. Even now, I do not object to the leading and main principles of my old party, so much as I curse and deprecate the tone of its acknowledged leaders and supporters. If there is any reason which will prevent General Scott from effecting an honorable peace, commanding, as he does, the whole city of the Aztecs, with his powerful battery, it is the spirit of treason which I unhesitatingly say is promulgated by the leading Whig journals at home. In a sortie upon some ladrones at Jalapa, a short time since, I possessed myself of all the late newspaper publications in that place, and upon examining them, I find that, in that place, as same as in Mexico, the strongest arguments published against our army are selections from Whig papers in the United States. I send you a late copy of the 'Boletin de Noticias,' in which you will perceive that the first article is an extract from the National Intelligencer. Your friend,

F. M. WYNKOOP."



This, sir, is the language of a patriotic Whig. He tells us, that *now* he has no objection to "the leading and main principles" of his party. But he prefers the interest and glory of his country to the ascendancy of a party, the policy of which, is in hostility to both. But as this is a question upon which military men have spoken, I will submit to the House an extract from the speech of another officer of high rank, who was at the head of his brigade in the bloody battles before the city of Mexico; who has done hard and honorable service; and who has the admiration and confidence of the American people. I refer, sir, to Brigadier General Pierce, who made the following remarks:

*Extract from the Speech of General Pierce, delivered at Concord, New Hampshire, on the 29th January.*

"He was here, not to discuss any matter in controversy, but to meet his friends. Still, the subject of the war was necessarily presented to their consideration by the occasion. Before engaging in it, it was his belief that it was irresistibly forced upon us. If he had ever doubted before, conversation with the most intelligent men in Mexico would have confirmed him in the opinion that, after the annexation of Texas, it was unavoidable on our part. Conquest was evidently neither the cause nor the object of the war, and yet he was constrained to say, that there had seemed to be, in the obstinacy of the Mexicans, the uniform success of our arms, and the present state of our relations with that country, something like the irresistible force of destiny. For one, it had been, and still was, his hope that a peace, just and honorable to both nations, might be in some way achieved. The obstacles to such a consummation, as he apprehended, had arisen from unexpected sources. There was, unquestionably, in Mexico, a formidable and intelligent party, who had resisted, and would resist, negotiations, so long as they could hope, through our army, to escape from the military misrule under which that country had literally groaned for the last twenty years.

"Again: the party desiring peace, and sincerely striving for it, had been embarrassed and weakened, if not discouraged, by the course of things here. President Herrera and the Mexican Congress, who were understood to be in favor of peace, might be so weakened by the declarations of our own countrymen, that they would not dare to conclude a peace. *When at the camp near Jalapa, a paper published in that city was brought to him, the whole of the first page of which, and a part of the second, was filled with extracts from the American press, and from speeches made in this country, which induced the editors to say, that while the intelligent and virtuous portion of the people of North America held such sentiments, nothing remained for them to add in justification of their course towards the United States.* On the same day that he read the bitter denunciations of the war, and all connected with it, from newspaper articles and speeches made at home, he saw posted by the way-side, and upon the ranches, the proclamation of Gen. Salas to the guerrillas, with the watchword of 'Death to Yankees, without mercy!' Thus, with communication cut off from the coast, with no knowledge of the situation of the army in the interior, with daily rumors of strong forces to obstruct their march, was there furnished from our own country food which fed the ferocity that pursued his command at every turn.

"The effect it was calculated to produce upon the Mexican Government and people was sufficiently obvious. What was the feeling inspired in his own command, it was unnecessary to say. However lightly their position might be regarded at home, they knew that there was but one course, and that was to go forward.

"*In the office of the Secretary of State, in the city of Mexico, a large collection of extracts from newspapers and speeches of our own countrymen were found filed away in the pigeon holes, and had been used in preparing proclamations to inflame the Mexican population.*

"He brought no accusation against any party or any man. Men of all parties, in this country, exercised their own judgment, and expressed their own opinion, in their own way; and so he trusted it would ever be; but he could not but regard it as most unfortunate that upon a great question, involving the blood of our countrymen, and so deeply and vitally the interests of the nation, we could not present a united front. If we could have done so, he firmly believed that months ago there would have been a peace, just and honorable to both nations. If we could do so now, he thought the skies were bright and promising. General Pierce, after again thanking the audience for their kind reception, sat down amid repeated and enthusiastic cheering."

The views of Wynkoop and Pierce spring from patriotic hearts, and are the honest convictions of their judgment, formed upon full and accurate information obtained in Mexico, and from the people, operated upon by these influences. They are expressed, I am led to believe, without reference to party, or their effect upon party; for neither gentleman has any connection with political life. In the absence of this convincing testimony, from my own knowledge of the Mexican character, I have never doubted that the course of partizans in this country, since the policy of the Whig party forced them to make the Mexican war an issue, would have this effect. They are

accustomed to constant mutations of government in their own country—to frequent gritos and pronunciamientos, which result in the overthrow of one military chieftain by the revolutionary arm of another; and isolated as they are from the rest of the world by a Chinese system of commercial policy, it is natural, that her ignorant and degraded population should think that a similar state of things exists elsewhere; that our administrations are as ephemeral as their own, and that the present Executive could not sustain himself against a threat of impeachment from Webster, a grito from Corwin, or a pronunciamiento from Clay. In support of these opinions, I might refer to many distinguished names which the Mexican war has given to immortality; Doniphan, Twiggs, Morgan, and a host of others, have expressed their deep indignation, that in the course of partizan warfare adopted by Whig politicians, they should be alike reckless of the honor of their country, and the sufferings they visit upon our citizen soldiery in a foreign land. But I will be excused from offering more testimony on this subject, when the weight of military evidence is already so much in my favor. I have heard many voices from Mexico on this subject, and the gentleman from Tennessee is the only one who has expressed the opinion that the protraction of the war was attributable to the inadequacy of our military force.

But I must proceed to other questions made in this debate. The gentleman from Tennessee has enlightened the House with his views of constitutional law, and has made his exposition of the vote of the House, given some time ago in reference to the causes of the war. The gentleman may be a very good fighter; he has acquired some fame at Cerro Gordo; he passed through that battle, I believe, unscathed; but still there are some remarkable incidents connected with that battle which will give the gentleman fame. I believe it was said by a distinguished officer who commanded at Cerro Gordo, that the gentleman from Tennessee at least lost his hat upon that occasion—

The Speaker here interposed, and said he must call the gentleman to order.

Mr. INGE (continuing) said he was going on to remark, that however good a fighter the gentleman might be, he had a great objection to—

Mr. HASKELL rose inquiringly, and said he did not hear the remark which the gentleman had made.

Mr. INGE observed that the Speaker had pronounced it out of order.

The SPEAKER. The gentleman from Alabama will proceed in order.

Mr. INGE (Mr. H. still retaining his position upon the floor) said, I have no objection to proceeding in the remarks I have made, and in further remarks, if I am not called to order.

The SPEAKER. The Chair must insist upon the observance of the rules of the House.

Mr. INGE resuming, said. I am at liberty at least to comment upon the gentleman's legal and constitutional opinions as delivered here yesterday. I will read an extract or two from the report of Mr. Haskell's remarks of yesterday, contained in the *Intelligencer* of this morning, as follows:

"He could readily imagine how a war might be unjustly commenced, and yet justly prosecuted. For instance: he might use insulting language to the gentleman from Mississippi. He might endeavor to bully that gentleman and alarm him by threats. The gentleman from Mississippi might reply in a similar spirit, and might insult him (Mr. H.) in return, and ultimately strike him. He (Mr. H.) would grant that he had done wrong in threatening, bullying, and attempting to intimidate the gentleman from Mississippi, but he had been struck, and consequently, he had to defend himself; and whatever fighting he did after that, he considered was done in self-defence, and fully justified."

Now, whence did the gentleman from Tennessee derive his notions of law? Did he take his position upon his own authority, or could he refer to precedent? Let me ask the gentleman, in what school of law or of philosophy he had learned his lesson? Did he draw it from the great sources of the

British law—from Coke and Blackstone? Does he draw it from the great code of the Roman law? Why, they inculcate no such doctrines. It is not the common law of this country, and I cannot believe it is the statute law of Tennessee. Surely there is no statute in Tennessee which will authorize him to pursue such a course. The gentleman has said he might bully a man—he might intimidate him by threats, and when the man strikes him, he may defend himself, and then go on fighting *ad libitum*.

MR. HASKELL (Mr. I. yielding for explanation) said the gentleman from Alabama misapprehended the position he had taken. The idea he had intended to convey by the illustration he had made use of, was this: that the President of the United States, and not the people of the country, had committed the first assault; that the attempt at intimidation, the threat, the bullying, if they pleased, was done by the President of the United States; and that when Congress assembled, and the people, through their representatives, first came to vote supplies of men and money to get ourselves out of the difficulty into which the President had plunged us, it was necessary and right.

MR. INGE, resuming, said the explanation was a mere repetition of what I have just read from the gentleman's remarks of yesterday, and does not alter the case. I confess, sir, that my very limited and cursory reading of the law of assault and battery, has led me to very different conclusions. I have learned from the horn book of the law, that "threatening, bullying, and attempting to intimidate," were unlawful as well as indecent acts, and that no glory could be won in a conflict provoked by such aggressions. The gentleman voted for the resolution I have commented on, declaring the war to be, "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President;" and he now says, he has never "characterized it as an unjust war." Well, sir, this is a refinement in reasoning upon a constitutional question, which it is a little difficult to comprehend. He will find it quite as difficult to maintain his consistency in this case, as to establish his legal principles of assault and battery; his assault and battery principles were offered by way of illustrating the consistency of his constitutional views, and strangely enough, the illustration is more preposterous than the argument. All writers upon the law of nations inform us, that war cannot be lawfully commenced, unless it is demanded by the highest necessity to maintain the national rights, or defend the national soil from aggression; but the gentleman from Tennessee repudiating all that has been written, and adopting a "*lex non scripta*" of his own, tells us that a war may be waged without any necessity at all, and yet be a just war. In this connection, the words "unnecessary" and "unjustifiable" are convertible terms. But with these remarks, I will leave the gentleman's argument and his illustration mutually casting their radiance upon each other. With the morality of the opinions expressed, I have nothing to do. Such morality would find a more appropriate utterance in the grog shop, than in this hall, and would better regulate the conduct of the bully who fights upon the street, than the intercourse of nations.

I beg you to believe, Mr. Speaker, that I do not refer to these ridiculous sophisms, because it is necessary to expose them; in the nakedness of their absurdity they stand self-exposed. But my object is, to exhibit the policy of the Whig party, and to show that their charges are as groundless as their denunciations are unpatriotic.

Well, sir, the great objects of our campaigns have been accomplished—the American Constitution extends its broad Ægis over California, and our soldiers are bivouacked in the National Palace of Mexico; and the legitimate consequences of these campaigns—consequences, designed and confidently expected by the President, are in the course of rapid fulfilment. A peace is now negotiating, nay, is partially negotiated—a peace honorable to our own country, and just to Mexico. But this peace question has shared the fate of the war question; and as the grim visage of war could not terrify into submission the spirit of party, so neither could the Goddess of Peace soothe it into quietude.

It will be remembered that among the many groundless charges, hurled with impotent energy against the President, it has been said that he did not desire peace, that his object was the conquest and annexation of the whole of Mexico, to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec ; that his messenger of peace has secret instructions to defeat peace. All this was said in disregard and contempt of the official declarations of his intentions to both Houses of Congress. But the Mexican Government, "chastened by adversity," has submitted to us a treaty, which has been transmitted to the Executive, and although it came surrounded, like the head of Medusa, with every circumstance to excite prejudice and aversion, the President, (with some slight modifications,) determined to accept it. Now, sir, so long as it was supposed the President would reject the treaty, the Whig party here were unqualified in their approbation of it. But when he does accept it, and becomes identified with it, as in the case of the Texas question and the war question, instantly it assumes a new aspect to party optics. The vituperative organs of the Whig party in both Houses of Congress now condemn it as dishonorable. But I am asked, sir, how the Whig party can oppose it, after its ratification by the vote of that party in the Senate ? I answer, by inquiring how they could oppose the annexation of Texas, when they were known to be favorable to it, until their party leader commanded them to wheel and countermarch ? How they could oppose the Mexican war, after recording their approbation of it upon the journals of Congress ? In all these acts we see one immutable motive—the lust of political power ; one fixed object—the ascendancy of party.

As I have said, sir, I am in favor of the organization of party when the establishment of salutary principles is the object. But the Whig party cannot have this object in view, for they now renounce, as in 1840, their whole political creed. They not only renounce their creed, but are gravely deliberating upon the expediency of abandoning that distinguished and gallant man (who will deny to him gallantry in party warfare?) who has justly been termed the "embodiment" of Whig principles. They think that Whig principles, like the fabled shirt, will stick to Mr. Clay, and consume him, despite their efforts to pull them off ; they believe that Achilles is too feeble to wear his own armor, and that he will sink and die under its weight : Therefore they meditate the selection of a candidate who is not identified with Whig measures, whose name is not upon the records of legislation, and who will consent to run as the Whig candidate, under the sobriquet of "no party." They do not conceal their preference for an orthodox Whig, but knowing that the availability of a Whig candidate is always in an inverse ratio to his orthodoxy, they are willing to sacrifice preference to expediency. They expect to induce the people to believe that Governments are instituted for the benefit of the governors, not the governed ; that office is created for the candidate, not for the people, and therefore the inquiry is to be confined to the personal claims of the candidate, without reference to the principles he proposes to carry out.

The people will see that this policy does not supersede parties, but only substitutes a different party criterion—the claims of a man, instead of the soundness of his principles. In my opinion, sir, no man can have any just claim to office, but his ability to discharge its duties for the benefit of the people ; and those who make this experiment upon popular credulity will learn that the voters of 1848 have not forgotten the lessons of 1840 ; and that no party will be sustained by the American people which repudiates principle as a bond of union, and which herds together only from the morbid cravings of a common appetite—an appetite for the spoils of office.







